

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Cuban rail workers defend safety, gains of socialist revolution

— PAGE 9

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 87/NO. 12 MARCH 27, 2023

US bank failures reflect capitalist crisis as rulers debate budget

BY TERRY EVANS

Democrats and Republicans are tied up in partisan squabbling over President Joseph Biden's \$6.8 trillion budget plan. While they disagree on Biden's proposed social expenditures and new taxes to fund them, both parties agree on the need to allocate billions more to Washington's war machine as the U.S. rulers face challenges from Beijing and Moscow.

At the same time Biden announced his budget, a number of U.S. banks faced a growing crisis, with three bank failures in five days.

Biden knows his proposals have no chance of being backed by the Republicans, who narrowly control the House. His proposals are part of putting together the Democrats' 2024 presidential and congressional campaigns, and blaming the Republicans for a government shutdown over the debt level if no deal is reached.

Some \$842 billion in Biden's budget is allocated for the Pentagon, a 3.2% increase from last year. A White House

Continued on page 2

Defend Ukraine independence! Back fight to defeat Putin's war

Protests against Moscow's invasion continue in Russia



Telegram

These Russian soldiers are among many in Moscow's invasion force in Ukraine who are complaining that "command doesn't care about us." Tens of thousands of Russian workers and farmers in uniform are cannon fodder as Putin's war of conquest in Ukraine continues.

BY ROY LANDERSEN

As Moscow attempts to crush the Ukrainian people, sending wave after wave of Russian conscripts to their deaths in the assault on the city of Bakhmut, the Vladimir Putin regime has launched its biggest air strikes in several weeks on Ukrainian cities.

The Kremlin unleashed a bombardment of residential areas and critical infrastructure in 10 regions March 9. Half of its 81 missiles and drones were downed by Ukrainian fire. But "hypersonic" and other high-speed missiles evaded air defenses. Three thermal power stations were hit and the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant temporarily lost its electricity supply, crucial to cooling its reactors.

Putin's drive to inflict maximum death and destruction is similar to the targeting and slaughter of vast civilian populations in Dresden and Hamburg, Germany, and Tokyo by the U.S. rulers and their imperialist allies in World War II. They had the sole aim of demoralizing working people.

Continued on page 7

Working people in East Palestine fight for control over area cleanup



AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar

Cleanup crew places booms across stream in East Palestine to try to stem spread of harmful chemicals after Feb. 3 derailment. Norfolk Southern rail bosses, backed by government, ignored impact on residents, setting fire to five cars of vinyl chloride, worsening toxic disaster.

BY CANDACE WAGNER

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — Socialist Workers Party members visited with workers and farmers here March 13-14, discussing how rail workers and other union members, farmers, small proprietors and youth in the area can come together to force Norfolk Southern rail bosses and the government to clean up the serious damages caused by the Feb. 3 derailment, massive fire and burn-off

of toxic chemicals. This presents an opportunity to work together to monitor and take control over the entire effort.

Norfolk Southern CEO Alan Shaw testified at a Senate hearing in Washington March 9, claiming he's "deeply sorry," and the company will do whatever is necessary to make things right. Residents in the East Palestine area we've spoken with don't believe him.

Continued on page 8

'Militant' wins victory in fight against prison ban in Florida

BY SETH GALINSKY

In an important victory for freedom of speech and the press, Florida prison authorities March 9 overturned a ban on the *Militant's* Jan. 30 issue. They instructed officials at Blackwater River Correctional Facility to give the paper to subscribers of the socialist newsweekly there.

The ban had been challenged by a broad outcry from defenders of constitutional rights, including Amnesty International USA, American Civil Liberties Union Prison Project, ACLU of Florida, Florida Press Association, National Coalition Against Censorship, PEN America, and the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

The privately run Florida state prison's ban claimed two articles — one on a New York nurses strike and the other on "Women, life, freedom" pro-

Continued on page 11

Join campaign to expand reach of 'Militant,' books, spring fund drive

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

With this issue the international campaign begins to expand the reach of the *Militant* and books by Socialist Workers Party and other revolutionary leaders and to raise \$165,000 for the paper.

Members of the SWP and Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, and U.K. will be discussing their pro-

Continued on page 3

Communist League: Repeal laws against non-French speakers, immigrant workers

BY STEVE PENNER

MONTREAL — "Working people and our unions should oppose Premier Francois Legault's anti-working-class campaign against immigrants. This is now centered on demanding that Ottawa shut down the unofficial Roxham Road crossing between Canada and the U.S. used by thousands of immigrants from Haiti, Mexico and the Middle East seeking a better life," said Beverly Bernardo, Communist League candidate for the Saint-Henri-Sainte-Anne district in Quebec's March 13 provincial by-election. She was speaking at a candidates' meeting here March 7 attended by 70 people.

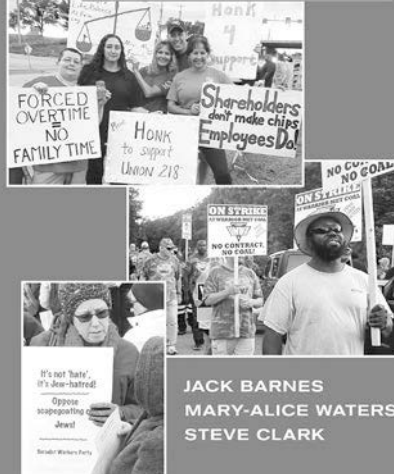
"We should also oppose his govern-

Continued on page 4

Get this new book!

The low point of labor resistance is behind us

THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY LOOKS FORWARD



\$7 until May 31 (normally \$10)
\$5 with 'Militant' subscription

Bank failures, budget debate

Continued from front page
press statement says this includes \$9.1 billion to expand “U.S. force posture, infrastructure, presence, and readiness” in the Pacific, to counter the rising threat the U.S. rulers face from Beijing. Money is allocated for long-range, undersea and hypersonic missiles. Some \$23.8 billion is set aside for what the White House calls “a safe, secure, and effective nuclear stockpile.”

These proposals come as the capitalist rulers in Beijing extended their reach in the Middle East, fostering an agreement between the rulers in Iran and Saudi Arabia. For years Washington has sought to pit the regimes in Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Muslim countries against Tehran and to push them to recognize Israel. The reactionary rulers in Iran threaten to destroy Israel. The Beijing-backed deal is another blow to Washington’s pursuit of its interests in the region.

Most Republicans back more money for the military. “We’re the greatest fighting force in the history of the world,” Biden boasted, ruling out any cuts to Washington’s armed forces or its spy agencies.

“When Biden says ‘we,’ he means the ruling capitalist families he serves,” Lea Sherman, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New Jersey State Assembly, told the *Militant*. “There is no ‘we’ of working people and capitalists.

“Workers can place no confidence in the bosses’ government, or its budgets. Our stance is, ‘Not one penny, not one person, for the U.S. rulers’ war machine.”

With an eye on the 2024 election, Biden claimed his budget would help working people in a March 9 speech

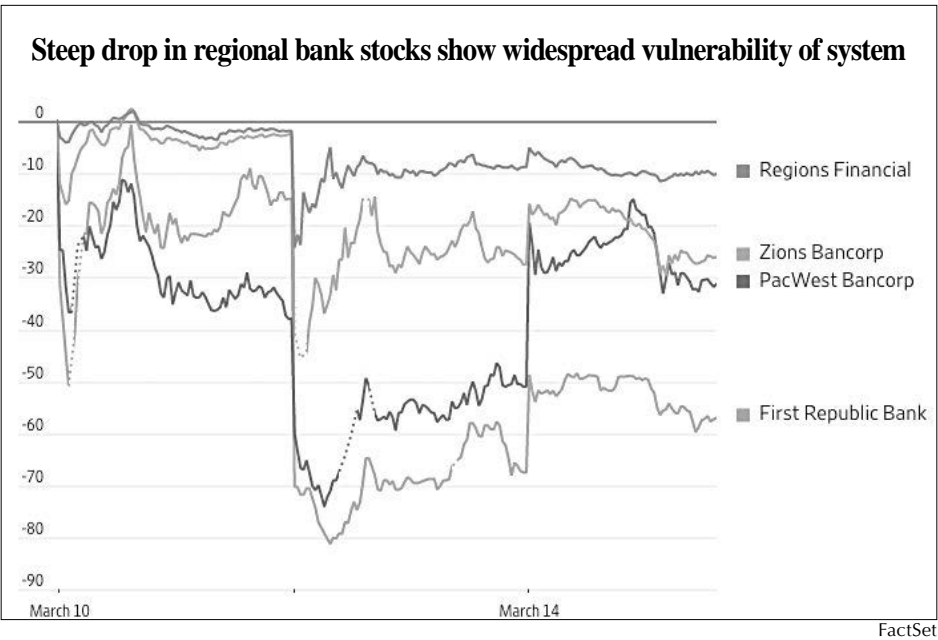
in Philadelphia. He said he will raise corporate taxes from 21% to 28%, taxes on U.S. companies’ foreign profits from 10.5% to 21% and hike the top tax rate on the wealthy. This will “lift the burden on hard-working Americans,” he claimed.

But the propertied owners easily find ways to evade or undercut any tax hikes, defending their profits and class prerogatives. They fight to shift the burden onto the backs of working people, pushing down wages, cutting their workforce and using speedup to extract more from the labor of those of us left.

“Far from backing the capitalist rulers’ budget, my party says workers need to join together and use our unions to fight for what our class and all those oppressed by capital need,” Sherman said. “We need to build our own party, a labor party based on our unions, to fight against attacks by the bosses and their government. We need to chart a course toward taking political power into our own hands.” Both capitalist parties say they want to lower the government’s deficit, but this is no answer to the problems working people face. However, how they intend to solve that problem — at our expense — *does* concern us. We already face the scourge of inflation alongside more layoffs. Both the crisis of capitalist production and trade, and the threat of more wars, bears down on workers and our families.

Bank shutdowns

In the midst of today’s economic crisis, three U.S. banks went belly up March 8-12, arousing fears on Wall Street and Washington of deeper problems. Silicon Valley Bank’s plunge was the second-largest bank failure



After March 10 collapse of Silicon Valley and Signature banks, major U.S. regional bank stocks plunged, with First Republic Bank closing down over 60% on March 13. Despite capitalists’ claims of “big stock rally” March 14, shares of First Republic remained down.

in U.S. history. Silicon Valley was based on servicing tech companies, new startups and venture capitalists. Among the bank’s customers put in jeopardy were streaming device maker Roku and craft internet site Etsy.

The other two banks, Silvergate and Signature banks, had opened their coffers to the crypto industry before the high-profile collapse of FTX and arrest of its founder, Sam Bankman-Fried. Signature’s failure is the third largest in U.S. history.

The value of bonds and other assets at the collapsed banks given as securities by corporate borrowers had dropped as a result of the Federal Reserve raising interest rates. Each bank was hit by a rush of withdrawals, forcing bank executives to sell off securities in their reserves in a doomed attempt to meet these requests.

The capitalist rulers and their government fear an explosion of bank failures. When markets opened March 13, commercial banks fell on the Nasdaq index over 10%, their largest decline since 2008, the *Wall Street Journal* reports.

The turmoil fed a sharp drop in Treasury bonds, where the yield on two-year Treasury notes has fallen faster than in any three-day stretch since 1987. Investors quoted by the *Journal* said they hoped this would bring a quick end to further interest rate increases by the Fed.

Biden took to the media to say his administration would use government resources to ensure that none of the big capitalist depositors in those banks

would lose money. More broadly his administration offered all corporate depositors at any bank the option to cash in their devalued Treasury bonds at full face value for the rest of the year. Biden claims his promise to give billions to corporate depositors won’t harm working people, but someone will have to pay for his promises.

Assault on jobs and wages

Biden says his administration has created more jobs in two years “than any American president has created in four.” But this is malarkey. Some 3.5 million workers have left the labor force since the pandemic. This February 5.9 million people were officially counted as jobless. And that doesn’t count 5.1 million more workers who would like a job but have given up looking for one. More than 4 million more are forced to work part time because they can’t find full-time work.

Over the past year soaring prices have hit working people hard, especially on necessities of life from food to rent. Many workers have been forced to try to hold down two or three jobs, facing a growing debt burden and challenges in keeping a roof over their heads.

To try and ease the scourge of rising prices, *Financial Times* columnist Raghuram Rajan says the Federal Reserve must create “some slack in the labor market.” This is a call for pushing unemployment higher, and as a result creating

Continued on page 3

THE MILITANT

Fight for health care, not for profits!

Bosses at one-half of all rural hospitals in the U.S. closed their obstetrics units by 2020, leaving half of women in these areas with no prenatal care within 30 miles. Only working people, the ‘Militant’ says, can address challenges to protect workers and new life.

National Union of Healthcare Workers
Protest against closing down maternity ward in Petaluma Valley, California, Feb. 15.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

NEW READERS

☐ \$5 for 12 issues

RENEWAL

☐ \$10 for 12 weeks

☐ \$20 for 6 months

☐ \$35 for 1 year

NAME

ADDRESS

CITYSTATEZIP

PHONEE-MAIL

UNION/SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION

CLIP AND MAIL TO THE MILITANT, 306 W. 37TH ST., 13TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10018. OR SUBSCRIBE ONLINE AT: WWW.THEMILITANT.COM

12 weeks of the *Militant* outside the U.S.: Australia, A\$10 • United Kingdom, £4 • Canada, Can\$7 • Caribbean and Latin America, US\$10 • Continental Europe, £8 • France, 8 euros • New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, A\$10 • All other areas, US\$16 (Send payment to addresses listed in business information box)

The Militant

Vol. 87/No. 12

Closing news date: March 15, 2023

Editor: John Studer

Managing Editor: Terry Evans

Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Seth Galsinsky, Martín Koppel, Roy Landersen, Jacob Perasso, Vivian Sahner, Brian Williams.

Published weekly except for one week in January, two weeks in June, one week in August, two weeks in December.

Business Manager: Bob Bruce

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Telephone: (212) 244-4899

Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: themilitant@mac.com

Website: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States: For one year send \$35 to above address.

Latin America, Caribbean: For one year send \$85 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

Africa, Asia, and the Middle East: For one year send \$85 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

Canada: For one year send Canadian \$45 to the Militant, 7107 St. Denis #204, Montreal, Quebec H2S 2S5.

United Kingdom: Send £30 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London, 5 Norman Road (first floor), Seven Sisters, London, N15 4ND, England.

Republic of Ireland and Continental Europe: Send £85 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London at above address.

France: Send 100 euros for one year to Diffusion du Militant, BP 10130, 75723 Paris Cedex 15.

Australia: Send A\$70 for one year to P.O. Box 73 Campsie, NSW 2194 Australia.

New Zealand and the Pacific Islands: Send A\$70 for one year to above address.

Submissions to the *Militant* may be published in the newspaper in print and digital format. By submitting, authors represent that their submissions are original and consent to publication in this manner.

Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*’s views. These are expressed in editorials.

NJ sanitation workers discuss strike over wages, boss attacks

BY JANET POST

CAMDEN, N.J. — Joanne Kuniansky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New Jersey state Senate, along with Chris Hoeppner, SWP candidate for mayor of Philadelphia, and this *Militant* reporter, visited the sanitation workers picket line here in solidarity March 4. The members of Teamsters Local 115 were glad to talk to us. The workers walked out Jan. 31 against Waste Management over wages, health benefits and bosses' increasing use of disciplinary measures. On March 5 they voted to accept the latest contract proposal.

The bosses "didn't want us to strike and set a precedent for other workers," Bob Klein, a driver for 26 years, told Kuniansky. "Working people do support the unions and appreciate when we fight," she said.

Many workers talked about how the bosses try and force them to do unsafe jobs. "They will say, 'Well, Billy did this, so why can't you do it?'" striker Rhashik Mathes told Kuniansky.

"We have the right to go home at the end of the day in the same shape that we started the day," Kuniansky replied. "We need workers control over safety and all aspects of what we do on the job."

Striker Bill Atkinson told the SWP candidate that the bosses really don't care about maintenance or making equipment safe, "but we should say, 'see something, fix something.'"

Driver Joe Gallagher pointed to a huge mirror above the entrance where the trucks enter and leave the yard. "We've been asking them to repair that mirror for a year," he said. "Someone is going to get hurt."

"It's not just a question of money for the companies," Steve DeCecco, a driver for 34 years, said. "They'll throw money at us all day to keep us down. Years ago, the union had the right to approve safety and rule changes, then they gave us over \$1,000 to take that away."

"That's what we call 'blood money,'" Kuniansky said. "It's a bribe. Whenever a boss has tried to buy me with some 'bonus,' I tell my co-workers I'm giving the money to my party to strengthen the labor movement."

DeCecco talked about the disaster of the recent rail derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. He said he has a friend who lives in Paulsboro, New Jersey, near the bridge where a Con-rail train derailed in 2012, spewing 23,000 gallons of vinyl chloride —

the same toxic chemical as was showered on the water and soil in the Ohio derailment. "We, the people, always have the right to know what's causing any pollution," he said.

"The volunteer firemen in Ohio weren't told about the chemicals spilled or provided protective equipment," said Klein. "We know about this too, because as sanitation workers we weren't provided protective equipment during the COVID pandemic."

Importance of unions

Gallagher talked about the importance of having unions. "Some people say the unions are only for 'disgruntled employees' or when a worker is facing discipline for an infraction. We're picking up trash — how much of an 'infraction' could we have?" he asked. "And what about company 'infractions'? Who's going to fight those?"

"Why is it that we can't leave work to go home when there's a problem with our children or family?" asked a striker named Moe. "The company thinks, the hell with your children."

Kuniansky showed the strikers the new Pathfinder book, *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark. Moe said he liked the picture of the Frito-Lay strikers on the front cover holding a sign saying, "Forced over-



Militant/Janet Post

Joanne Kuniansky, SWP candidate for New Jersey state Senate, talks with striking Camden, New Jersey, sanitation workers, from left, Bill Atkinson, Rhashik Mathes, and Moe, on Teamsters Local 115 picket line March 4. "We need workers control over our jobs," said Kuniansky.

time: No family time." He said, "This is a worldwide problem."

"Yes, the capitalist system ensures that profits come first all over the world," said Kuniansky.

Hoeppner, who is a rail worker and member of the SMART-TD union, talked with strikers about the grueling conditions they face. And how the Joseph Biden administration led a bipartisan Congress to use the anti-labor Railway Labor Act to impose on workers a bad contract that they had voted down.

"It made me sick when I heard Biden did that," said Teamsters Local 115 shop steward Ivan James.

"We have to stand up for our rights," said Hoeppner. "We can look at other examples in struggles by the working class and emulate those fighters."

Kuniansky said workers need to form our own party, a labor party based on our unions, that can reach out to all workers, farmers, and others to break from the Democrats and Republicans.

"I really like that idea!" James said.

Help expand reach of 'Militant,' books, fund drive

Continued from front page

gram and activities with workers and farmers at labor actions, social protests and door to door in cities, towns and rural areas.

Goals for the campaign are to increase *Militant* subscriptions by 1,350, get out 1,350 books and go over the top on the Militant Fighting Fund.

An integral part of the campaign will be building the June 8-11 SWP International Educational Conference at Oberlin College in Ohio. At the gathering SWP and CL members, supporters and other workers, unionists and young people they've been working with will have the opportunity to discuss the explosive ramifications of the unfolding shifts in U.S. and world politics, the party's working-class course and its Marxist continuity. These are explained in the book *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark.

Getting this book into the hands of as many working people as possible is at the center of the spring campaign. Ten other titles are also on special with subscriptions to the *Militant* (see page 8). All Pathfinder titles are at 20% discount during the campaign.

In Eagan, Minnesota, SWP members Gabrielle Prosser and Edwin Fruit met with Rod Coleman at his home March 2. Coleman first subscribed to the *Militant* in 2020. When he learned about Prosser's campaign for governor last year he renewed his subscription. "I'm so glad I had someone to vote for," he said.

Coleman worked on his family's

dairy farm until 2002, when the price of milk went below the cost of production, forcing him and many other small farmers off the land. He's currently unemployed.

Prosser pointed to how a fighting alliance of workers and farmers was built during the Cuban Revolution. "In Cuba, the new government carried out a far-reaching agrarian reform," she said, "giving deeds to the peasants who worked the land. In this country the SWP calls for nationalization of the land, so those who work it don't fear losing it."

"That way they can't foreclose on it," added Fruit.

"Socialist revolution is what's needed," Coleman said. He bought *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us*, *The Jewish Question* and *Teamster Rebellion*.

Reaching out to workers and farmers

SWP members are discussing a road forward for workers as they extend the party's reach far and wide.

"We're going to Pajaro in the Salinas Valley this weekend to talk with farmworkers," Betsey Stone, organizer of the SWP branch in Oakland,

Discounted books for prisoners

Pathfinder Press offers books at a 50% discount plus \$2.75 shipping per order. Prisoners can mail their prepaid orders to: Pathfinder Press, PO Box 162767 Atlanta GA 30321-2767 Friends and family members can order for them online. For more info: pathfinderpress.com

US capitalist crisis

Continued from page 2

greater competition among workers for jobs as bosses drive to lower wages.

"To prevent layoffs our unions need to fight for a shorter workweek with no cut in weekly take-home pay, to share the work around," Sherman said. "Escalator clauses are needed in every union contract and in Social Security and other government programs, so that when prices rise our wages go up automatically."

Acting on the fact that all these political questions are class questions is at the heart of the election campaigns being run by SWP candidates in 2023.

California, told the *Militant*. "The town is flooded after the levee broke. Officials pay little attention to the maintenance of infrastructure." Some 1,000 people have had to leave their homes. The levee has failed several times over decades, wrecking havoc in nearby communities.

"We also want to discuss with workers in rural areas who have been hard hit by hospital closures and have to travel much further to get the care they need," Stone added.

Members of the SWP branch in Ft. Worth, Texas, are planning a trip to east Texas soon, Dennis Richter, the branch organizer, reported. "We want to organize plant gate teams to get the *Militant* into the hands of oil workers there, get back to United Steelworkers members who fought the oil bosses' lockout at ExxonMobil, and get to know toilers on the land in an area with a high number of Black farmers."

To join in campaigning, contact distributors near you listed on page 10.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

ILLINOIS

Chicago

'The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward.' Speaker: John Hawkins, Socialist Workers Party, participant in Havana International Book Fair. Fri., March 24. Dinner, 6 p.m.; program, 7 p.m. Donation: Dinner and program, \$15; program only, \$5. *University Church, 5655 S. University Ave.*

Vt. dairy farmer: ‘Workers and farmers need each other’

BY SETH GALINSKY
AND WILLIE COTTON

BRIDPORT, Vt. — “There were 42 dairy farms in this area in the 1980s,” 11th-generation dairy farmer Paul Plouffe told these two *Militant* worker-correspondents when we visited his farm here Feb. 5. “Now there are just eight left, after a small organic farmer went bankrupt last year.”

“I could sell my farm for more than a million,” Plouffe said. “But I’m not interested. And my sons want to keep farming.”

Plouffe is one of a dozen North American farmers who signed a letter to the National Association of Small Farmers of Cuba (ANAP) last May, sending solidarity on the 61st anniversary of the organization’s founding and the 63rd anniversary of the First Agrarian Reform carried out by the Cuban Revolution.

The agrarian reforms in Cuba nationalized the land, preventing farmers from losing their farms because they had a bad year or couldn’t pay off loans. They could bequeath the farm to their children to keep farming, but couldn’t sell it.

Small dairy farmers across the United States have been squeezed by years of low prices for their milk imposed by the large milk processors, prices that didn’t cover the rising cost of production or the increasing prices demanded by feed, fertilizer and input monopolies. They also face rising loan interest rates combined with bureaucratic government regulation. In 2010 there were 1,015 dairy farms in Vermont, today there are 664.

“The big guys get all kinds of advantages,” Plouffe noted, referring to the big capitalist farmers. They get tax breaks, subsidies to buy machinery to capture methane from their cows or for installing solar panels, along with other government programs that aren’t available to the smaller family farms.

Plouffe raises about 90 dairy cows and grows corn and hay on his 400 acres of land. Unlike most dairy farmers, Plouffe owns most of his land outright, having inherited it from his father, who passed away last year.

“We’re fortunate, we don’t owe anything on our land,” he said. But that doesn’t mean he’s debt free. “We have rolling credit from the banks for

things like feed, cattle, machinery. “About seven years ago, I had to take out a \$100,000 loan to buy feed. I’m still paying it off,” he added. Last year he didn’t use any fertilizer on his corn, because it was too expensive and he didn’t want to take on more debt.

Recent economic shifts mean farmers have been able to command a higher price for the milk they produce, “so we’re doing OK,” Plouffe said. But he knows he can’t count on that continuing. His wife, Becky Plouffe, works at a store in town. “It’s really her income that’s subsidizing the farm.”

‘That’s capitalist!’

“I lost half my cows several years ago,” Plouffe recalls, “because the feed company mixed in the wrong minerals and poisoned them.

“The feed company wouldn’t even say they were sorry,” Plouffe said. “Instead, they put a retainer on all the lawyers in this area to keep me



Militant/Willie Cotton

Vermont dairy farmer Paul Plouffe pointed to challenges small farmers face in meeting costs of production for the milk they produce, with more dairy farmers being forced off the land.

from getting a good one. Tell me that isn’t capitalist!”

Plouffe went to court, “but the vet wouldn’t back me up. He works for all the big companies. If I had been a big farmer, they would’ve all kissed my ass.”

The big capitalist farmers are al-

ways looking to expand their operations, to swallow up neighboring farms, Plouffe notes. “It’s like a big rolling snowball to push the little guy out.” This allows them to get rid of competitors and maximize their profits.

Continued on page 5

Repeal laws against non-French speakers, immigrants

Continued from front page

ment’s moves to ban all non-French-speaking immigrants from coming to Quebec by 2026. And we should demand the repeal of Bill 21 and Bill 96, which weaken the ability of working people to defend our common class interests by dividing us by country of origin, religion and language.”

In 2022 nearly 40,000 people crossed into Canada and claimed asylum — almost all at Roxham Road, an hour’s drive south of Montreal.

Under a 2004 treaty between Washington and Ottawa, the Canadian government doesn’t honor asylum claims made at official border crossings, claiming the would-be refugee is already in a country — the U.S. — where they should not fear retribution.

However, if a migrant is able to cross the Canadian border unofficially, then makes an asylum claim from within Canada, it must be considered.

Bill 96, passed in 2022, declares French to be Quebec’s only official language and restricts the use of English and other languages. Bill 21, passed in 2019, bans government workers from wearing religious symbols, like the Muslim hijab, Jewish kippa and Sikh turban, on the job.

On this and all questions debated at the meeting, the Communist League candidate differentiated the party from the others by putting forward a working-class course.

‘Stop stigmatizing immigrants’

Denis Bolduc, general secretary of the Quebec Federation of Labor (FTQ), opposed the government’s course. The Coalition for the Future of Quebec (CAQ) government “must stop stigmatizing immigrants,” he said Sept 29. Such “comments fuel unfounded prejudice against immigrants.”

The union called on the Quebec government to welcome immigrants while maximizing their ability to learn French by organizing French courses in the workplace.

The FTQ’s position would be much stronger if it came out and opposed Bill 96. Instead, the federation supports

Quebec’s discriminatory French-language-only policy.

The CAQ government claims that French, the language used by 74.8% of those living in Quebec, is threatened by the growing number of immigrants who speak English — often as their second language.

CAQ leader Legault insists these immigrants threaten Quebec’s culture and values. During last fall’s Quebec general elections, he argued allowing more immigration would be “suicidal.”

Ottawa recently agreed to his demand that the Roxham Road refugees be shipped out of Quebec to be held in immigration centers elsewhere in Canada.

Canada’s government is also reinforcing Quebec’s anti-working-class campaign through federal Bill C-13, a proposed revision of the Official Languages Act. That act recognizes the right of people anywhere in Canada to work in, and be served by, the federal civil service in either French or English.

Bill C-13 incorporates Quebec’s Charter of the French Language, which declares French the only official language of Quebec. It doesn’t recognize the rights of those who speak other languages, apart from those who live in Quebec that went to English schools. The reactionary bill is supported by all parties in the federal parliament.

History of Quebec national struggle

Up until the last decades of the 20th century, Quebecois — the French-speaking majority in the province — faced systematic discrimination in wages, jobs, education and government services.

Through decades of struggle — including mass labor and street battles in the 1960s and ’70s — the working class in Canada pushed back the rulers’ oppressive divide-and-rule strategy. This was a significant victory for the entire working class.

There is no longer any discrimination against French-speaking people. According to the 2016 census, francophones in Quebec now earn 7% more than anglophones with comparable education.

Today French is the language used on a regular basis at work by over 90% of the province’s people.

“I don’t see a retreat of French. I see more people speaking both French and English,” Alexandre Bolduc, 34, a francophone train conductor here, told the *Militant*, adding “That’s not a problem.”

He and his English-speaking wife plan to help their four children become bilingual. He disagrees with the government restrictions on francophone children learning English, saying it should be a matter of choice.

Fight for status for all

“The immigration policies of both the government of Quebec and federal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau are designed to serve the class interests of Canada’s ruling capitalist families,” Bernardo told the *Militant* March 8.

“While Ottawa is bringing in record numbers of temporary foreign workers to Canada, it refuses to give the vast majority permanent status. This opens them up to superexploitation as cheap labor,” she said, “leaving them vulnerable to the threat of deportation if they fight for their rights.”

In 2017 there were about 500,000 temporary foreign workers in Canada. Ottawa deported over 12,000 migrants in 2020.

The FTQ, the Confederation of National Trade Unions and the Congress of Democratic Trade Unions — three of the four labor federations in Quebec — signed onto an open letter in Montreal’s *La Presse* Dec. 7 demanding that people without immigration status, such as those on work permits and refugees, be granted permanent status.

“It’s essential that our unions, and all defenders of democratic rights, join together to oppose the Legault and Trudeau governments’ anti-immigrant policies and laws denying minority language rights,” Bernardo said.

“We also need to demand Ottawa grant permanent status to all immigrants and refugees and end all deportations.”

New International
A MAGAZINE OF MARXIST POLITICS AND THEORY

THE CRISIS FACING WORKING FARMERS
by Doug Jenness

THE FIGHT FOR A WORKERS' AND FARMERS' GOVERNMENT IN THE U.S.
by Jack Barnes

Land reform and farm cooperatives in Cuba

STOP FARM FORECLOSURES

\$14

4

pathfinderpress.com

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Unionists resist French gov't attack on pension age

PARIS — French President Emmanuel Macron's push to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64 continues to meet mass resistance by workers across the country. March 7 was the sixth day of strikes and protests since mid-January, with at least 1.4 million people joining 260 demonstrations.

The CGT union federation says 700,000 protested here in the capital alone. Refuse workers went on strike for a week in half the city's districts.

"They are quite right to strike," pastry chef Romain Gaia told France24, despite trash piling up on the streets. "Normally they have no power, but if they stop work they really have."

Some unions have called several days of strikes shutting down the ports of Le Havre, Marseille, Calais, Rouen and Brest, as well as some railroads, refineries and nuclear power plants. Airports had to cut flights by up to 30% and electrical production has been cut by 20 gigawatts, forcing authorities to purchase power supplies from abroad.

Actions have spread to small towns and rural areas. In Bagnols-sur-Ceze, population 18,000, high school students joined a demonstration of more than 2,000. In Ales, population 40,000, nonunion workers in supermarkets and nursing homes joined rail workers and retired miners in demonstrations of 7,000.

Macron refuses to meet with the Intersyndicale, the group of eight union federations that called the action.

— Nat London

Support grows for hospital workers on strike in Hawaii

MAUI, Hawaii — Two weeks after nearly 500 hospital workers went on strike here against Kaiser's three Maui Health System facilities, the bosses arrived one hour late for the first negotiating meeting since the walkout began and then broke off discussions after just two hours.

"They are just playing with our emotions," Elen Quema, a housekeeper at Maui Memorial Medical Center, told

the *Militant*, "showing how they disrespect us and belittle us."

The strike by nurses aides, housekeepers, cafeteria workers and others continues to win solidarity from other workers and the community.

"UNITE HERE Local 5 from Honolulu, they came here just to support us," Quema said. "It's amazing how they come to help. Firefighters and other groups like the International Longshore and Warehouse Union are always here to help us."

"We have had an outpouring of support from teachers, hotel workers," added Tamara Manley, a picket captain.

United Public Workers union members went on strike Feb. 22, fighting for higher wages, better benefits and safe staff-patient levels. The demand for more hiring is a key issue, since workers have increasingly been forced to cover more work with less people.

"One housekeeper to a whole unit because they didn't want to hire," Quema said. "They float technicians to cover the nurses aides and other departments. This has been happening for five years."

Nonstriking workers and patients in the hospitals have been sending pictures to the union of deplorable conditions being tolerated by hospital bosses — blood



Militant/Nat London

Paris demonstration, part of March 7 national protests against Macron government proposal to raise retirement age. CGT union banner says, "Decontaminate society of capitalist virus."

on patient room floors, dirty sheets and hospital waste piled up in the emergency room. The photos have been posted on the union's website.

"So far everyone is motivated and very strong to finish this so we can go back," Quema said. The next scheduled negotiation is set for March 14.

"This is a pivotal moment in our fight for fair treatment and compensation. We cannot afford to let it slip away,"

United Public Workers' State Director Kalani Werner told the media. "By standing together and supporting each other, we can send a powerful message that we will not back down until our demands are met."

Messages of solidarity can be sent to United Public Workers, 841 Kolu Street Wailuku, Maui, HI 96793; (808) 244-0815.

— Neil Tupas

Dairy farmer: 'Workers and farmers need each other'

Continued from page 4

Farmers sell their milk to dairy "cooperatives," which in reality are just big capitalist milk-processing companies. If a farmer produces less than the assigned quota, he gets fined. But if he produces more than the quota, he's not guaranteed he'll get paid the full price for the extra milk. And there's all kinds of extra fees imposed on farmers.

"We have to pay them for trucking our milk to their processing plant," Plouffe said. "They recently jacked up that charge, saying they were paying the truckers more. But we don't know if the drivers who pick up the milk are really getting paid more."

Plouffe had followed protests by

truckers in Canada last year. "Farmers in Quebec blocked the roads to support the truckers. They were united and they do stuff," he said. "We haven't done anything like that here."

Even with all the dairy farmers who have been driven off the land, "we still have more weight than you think," he said. "Put us all together and we're at least equal to the big guys."

'If small farmers got together'

"You can imagine if all the small farmers got together we could park our trucks in front of the processing plants and keep any milk from coming in or out. Then we'd get some action."

We told Plouffe that the Socialist Workers Party explains that we need

an alliance of workers and farmers. Workers are wage slaves, farmers are debt slaves.

"We need each other," Plouffe said. "Factory workers make the things we use to grow the food they need. We're like spokes on a wheel. We need every spoke for the wheel to go around."

Plouffe doesn't think it makes much difference who is in the White House. "The president doesn't really make the decisions, it's the special interests," he said. "Donald Trump said a lot of stuff, but he didn't deliver."

Both the Democrats and Republicans defend the interests of the capitalist class, we said. That's why we think workers need our own party, a labor party based on the unions, that would fight for the interests of all working people all year round.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 30, 1998

DES MOINES, Iowa — Members of the United Steelworkers of America rallied in downtown Des Moines March 6 to support members of the United Auto Workers now in contract talks with Case Corp. The protest aimed its fire at Strom Engineering, a temp agency that has been recruiting workers to "help temporarily staff a company during a potential work stoppage, caused by a strike," as ads in the *Des Moines Register* put it.

Leading up to the action, union activists went undercover, going through Strom's application process. They confirmed that the outfit was lining up replacement workers.

The UAW contract expires March 29, and covers 3,300 workers at plants in Burlington, Iowa; Racine, Wisconsin; East Moline and Burr Ridge, Illinois; and St. Paul, Minnesota. Workers told the *Militant* that a key issue is opposition to mandatory overtime.



March 30, 1973

DENVER, March 20 — A young Chicano activist is dead, the victim of a police attack on an apartment building owned by the Chicano movement. A Chicana, aged 17, is hospitalized with a bullet wound in her chest. Her condition is critical. Another Chicano activist has a police bullet wound in his back.

There is well-justified suspicion that the police attack was planned. The dead youth, Luis Martinez, 20, was a director of El Ballet Chicano de Aztlan, part of La Escuela Tlatelolco. Tlatelolco is a school for Chicano youth from kindergarten through college.

It is operated by the Crusade for Justice, the Denver Chicano organization that has played a major role in spurring the development of the Chicano movement throughout the Southwest. The apartment building attacked by the cops is next door to the Crusade and Escuela headquarters.



March 29, 1948

A walkout of the miners is always the occasion for the kept press to hurl bitter diatribes against "union bosses," "labor monopolies" and above all to rant against the rank and file.

Anyone even slightly acquainted with the history of coal unionism knows how many struggles, pitched battles, bloodshed, hunger, and untold sacrifice went into building the union and establishing the firm morale, amazing discipline and spirit of solidarity which is now the hallmark of the miners.

The issue over which the miners have now walked out — pensions, health and welfare fund — is especially close to every miner's heart. In 1947, 1,165 miners were killed in mine accidents, 63,000 were injured. The miners know that they have only their own organization to rely on. That is why they back their union in every class fight with such solidarity and such unanimity.

Teamster Series

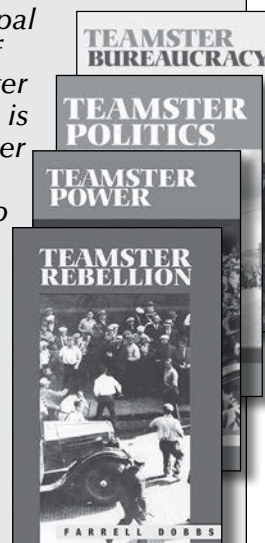
Lessons from U.S. labor battles of the 1930s

by Farrell Dobbs

"The principal lesson of the Teamster experience is not that under an adverse relationship of forces, the workers can be overcome, but that with proper leadership, they can overcome."

\$16 each
or all four for \$50

pathfinderpress.com



Retirees in Iran demand hike in pensions to match inflation



Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane Workers Union
Retired workers and war veterans protest March 12 in Shush, Khuzestan province, Iran. For weeks protests have demanded hikes in social security, as soaring prices cut living standards.

BY SETH GALINSKY

Weekly protests by retired workers in Iran that began Jan. 22 demanding the government raise social security payments to keep up with inflation continue. On March 12 and 13 retirees from the steel, telecommunications, sugar and other industries protested in at least a dozen provinces across the country.

The minister of the economy recently said inflation is nearing an annual rate of 45%, but the National Union of Retirees says that many basic necessities have more than doubled over the last year. The value of the Iranian currency lost some 30% of its value against the dollar in the last three months alone.

Even the head of the pro-regime “Veterans Union of the Iranian Labor Community” complained to the Iranian Labor News Agency that wages are too low, pointing out, “It’s not wage increases that cause an increase in inflation.”

Like workers and farmers throughout the capitalist world, toilers in Iran bear the brunt of the worldwide capitalist economic crisis, compounded by financial and trade sanctions imposed on Tehran by Washington and its allies. The crisis is exacerbated by the cost of the bourgeois clerical regime’s military interventions in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. The regime’s attempts to extend its counterrevolutionary reach are not popular among working people in Iran.

The independent Free Union of Iranian Workers noted that while the government owes substantial amounts to workers’ pension funds it has increased spending on hated government bodies that help repress and spread lies about the “Women, life, freedom” protests.

The Supreme Labor Council — a government body made up of bosses, government officials and pro-regime labor “representatives” — has not been able to agree on how much to raise the minimum wage this year. The council has been considering a minimum monthly wage of 18 million toman (\$380).

The Free Union of Iranian Workers says that’s not enough to live on. The group says it can cost 17 million to 20 million toman or more a month just to buy food for a family.

Meanwhile, Gholamhossein Mohse-

ni Ejehi, the head of Iran’s judiciary, claimed March 12 that the government had given amnesty and released 22,000 people who had been imprisoned for joining the protests that peaked in November. That is even higher than government opponents had previously estimated. While there have been numerous reports of individuals or small groups being released there haven’t been any reports in the press of mass releases.

The government continues to arrest union activists, defenders of the rights of oppressed nationalities, and other protesters, including many who joined actions last week demanding answers and an end to the poisoning of students at girls schools around the country.

The Tehran and Suburbs Bus Drivers Union called on the government to immediately and unconditionally release union leader Reza Shahabi, “as well as all imprisoned labor activists, teachers and political prisoners.”

Communists in Iran were in thick of popular revolution

Below are excerpts from “Revolution, Counterrevolution and War in Iran, Social and Political Roots of Workers’ Protests That Swept 90 Cities and Small Towns,” from the Militant in April 2018.

BY STEVE CLARK

The historic Iranian Revolution of 1979 was a deep-going, modern, popular social revolution in city and countryside, not a religious jihad as it is falsely portrayed by bourgeois voices. ...

Members of the communist party in Iran at that time — the Socialist Workers Party (HKS), later renamed the Workers Unity Party (HVK) — were in the thick of the revolutionary class struggle. They were workers in factories, refineries and other industrial workplaces, as well as volunteer soldiers combating the Iraqi invasion. Many of that party’s cadres and leaders had been recruited and trained by the Socialist Workers Party in the United States while studying or working here during the tyrannical reign of the shah. Other workers, soldiers and students were won to the party in Iran during the opening years of the revolution.

The HVK advocated “extension and unification of factory shoras”; “land dis-

Erbil book fair opens in Kurdistan Region in Iraq



Firdaous Mahmood

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region, Iraq — Since the 15th Erbil International Book Fair kicked off March 8, tens of thousands have come looking for books on a wide range of topics — including history, politics, science, technology and religion — as well as novels, poetry and children’s books.

This cultural event — held for the first time since 2019 due to the COVID pandemic — is a product of historic advances in the struggle of the Kurdish people for national self-determination. Some 30 million Kurds in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey make up the largest nation in the world without their own country. Amid the upheavals caused by U.S.-led military assaults since 1990, and other wars in the region, including the bloody civil war in Syria, Kurds have established an autonomous region and government in northeast Iraq.

Since the imperialist invasion and occupation of 2003 and terrorist violence that followed, many have sought refuge here from other parts of Iraq, and since 2011 from Syria. This is reflected in the range of people you meet. Participants have also traveled from across the Kurdistan Region, as well as from other parts of Iraq, including Mosul, Baghdad and Kirkuk. Most are looking for books in Kurdish, Arabic or English.

Pathfinder Books in London has participated in every book fair in this regional capital of the Kurdish region since 2017. More than 680 books by leaders of the communist movement and other revolutionaries have been sold halfway through the 10-day event.

Pathfinder’s latest title is *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark. Clark spoke on this at one of a series of televised presentations and book signings hosted by the book fair organizers.

Other titles addressing political questions arising out of capitalism’s world disorder have been popular, including *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity* by Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, George Novack and Waters; *Lenin’s Final Fight* by V.I. Lenin; *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* by Abram Leon; and a number of books on the fight for women’s emancipation.

Like many others, Hoshmand Salar said he knew Pathfinder from a previous fair, where he bought a collection of speeches by Malcolm X. “He influenced me a lot, so I was glad to see books on his life and ideas.” This time he got *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Barnes and *The Bolivian Diary* by Che Guevara.

— ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

tribution under the control of peasant shoras”; “the right of self-determination [and] autonomy” of Kurds and other oppressed nationalities; and equal rights for women, including “the right to work and equal pay for equal work,” “child care,” and “against compulsory veiling and any kind of discrimination and humiliation of women.” The HVK demanded full political liberties and the release of “all anti-imperialist and working-class political prisoners,” and called for “the extension and unification of workers, peasants, soldiers and Pasdaran [Revolution Guard] shoras. For a workers and peasants government.”

In the United States and around the world, it was only in the pages of the *Militant* ... that working people could find accurate, firsthand accounts of the Iranian Revolution and efforts by working people and the oppressed to defend and advance it in face of assaults by U.S. imperialism, by hostile regimes in the region, and by bourgeois forces in Iran itself. Members of Socialist Workers Party branches and trade union fractions in the United States took the truth about the revolution and our defense of it to co-workers in factories, mines and other workplaces, as well as

into the streets.

By the early 1980s, however, the bourgeoisie and Islamic Republic were employing increasingly brutal repression to turn back and defeat struggles by working people and the oppressed, consolidating the rulers’ counterrevolutionary clutch at home.

After Iranian military forces pushed Saddam Hussein’s invading army back across the border in mid-1982, Tehran sent its own troops into Iraq in large numbers. Whatever defensive purpose this initially served, the Tehran regime over the next several years sent wave after wave of teenage and other young Iranian working people to needless slaughter as it assaulted population centers in Iraq. ...

By the end of 1982, a combination of official and government-sponsored thug terror made it impossible for communists to any longer carry out political activity in Iran. The record of the proletarian internationalist course and unbroken continuity of that communist party, however, exists to be studied by new generations and put into practice as conditions permit. A good starting point can be found in issue no. 7 of *New International*.

Back Ukraine independence!

Continued from front page

Putin's bombardment is consistent with his goal of obliterating Ukraine. At the start of the war he claimed the country had no right to exist because its people had been part of Russia "since time immemorial." He blamed Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin for Ukraine's existence. In fact, the workers and farmers government that came to power after the 1917 Russian Revolution fought to end centuries of oppression by unconditionally granting all nations in the former czarist empire the right to self-determination.

Today Putin seeks to recreate the Russian Empire of the czars. He hopes the greater numbers of conscripted Russian infantry he uses as cannon fodder can wear out Kyiv's forces.

But so far Moscow has failed to damage the fighting morale of working people in Ukraine. Dnipro in the east has been hit by several deadly missile strikes in recent months. "Our psychological state has improved considerably," resident Inna Shtanko told the BBC. "The city has been transformed. Finally, street lights are back, and it's no longer scary to walk the city streets."

Russian troop morale hit

Months of shelling and building-by-building urban warfare have devastated Bakhmut. Ukraine's troops pulled back March 7 to defend positions west of the Bakhmutka River that divides the city. Tens of thousands of Russian conscripts — workers and farmers in uniform — have died on the battlefield there. Many are convicts forced into "volunteering" for the Wagner Group mercenaries.

Kyiv's defensive forces also face heavy casualties, although a fraction of those suffered by the invaders. Ukrainian medics are saving the lives of most wounded. Many of those who recover from their injuries return to active duty. Moscow's forces, in contrast, abandon many of their dead and wounded on the battlefield, adding to troop demoralization.

In Donetsk some Russian reservists have been locked in basements for refusing to follow orders. Soldiers from at least 16 regions of Russia have recorded

video messages since early February condemning commanders for their conduct of the war.

A video by soldiers in the 1004th regiment at the front in Donetsk was posted after a commander was sent from Kaliningrad, their home base, to quell protests by the troops. "Why should I fight there? What for? Who for?" one soldier is heard yelling at the commander in the video. "They're sending us to a sure death."

"Go jail us!" the soldier says. "I don't give a damn. At least I'll get to live."

"We're just sent in for slaughter," a soldier, called up from eastern Siberia's Irkutsk region, says in another video.

After four appeals by troops from the 1439th regiment to Putin to stop the slaughter, their wives and mothers recorded a video. "The commanders have abandoned them and told them not to leave their positions," one woman tells Putin. "Our men have been



Dmitry Shagin's painting, taken down at Moscow museum, depicts anti-war slogan, "The Mitki don't want to defeat anyone," developed by his art movement during protests against the 1979-89 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.



Moscow Times/Kirill Ponomarev

Russian emigres protest outside former Russian Embassy building in Tbilisi, Georgia, Feb. 24 on first anniversary of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Placards included "No to war," "12 months of Russian terror in Ukraine" and "Putin is not the motherland."

without food and water for days." Another says her husband told her that the soldiers "were shot and killed like at a shooting range."

Underground art

Putin's invasion is accompanied at home by a crackdown and jailing of opponents. Some artists continue to express their opposition to the invasion and show solidarity with the Ukrainian people through their work. But now they have to organize secret exhibitions by word of mouth, reminiscent of covert dissident shows held under the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union.

"There is much less freedom now. Exhibitions

are going deep underground," Elena Osipova, 77, a well-known St. Petersburg artist and protester, told the March 9 *Washington Post*. "No one talks about them openly, but they are happening all the time."

The cops frequently remove Osipova from her solo street protests but she continues anyway.

In January a painting by Dmitry Shagin was removed from the All-Russian Decorative Art Museum in Moscow because it depicted an antiwar slogan that emerged during protests against the invasion of Afghanistan by the Stalinist rulers in the Soviet Union. Moscow's long war there undermined morale within the army and fueled opposition to the regime at home, as is happening again today during Putin's war in Ukraine.

"We see censorship is returning," Shagin told the *Washington Post*. But artists will not be trampled on, he said. "Art is free. It cannot be controlled from outside, and it will always be free."

Protests push back attack on political rights in Georgia

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

After tens of thousands took to the streets in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, the country's ruling party backed off its plans to impose a law that would curtail political rights and limit freedom of the press.

Protesters say the bill was modeled after a 2012 Russian "foreign agents" law that allowed the Kremlin to ban unions and political organizations if they failed to declare receiving funds from abroad. The law was expanded after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine to target any media outlet, journalist

or individual Russian citizen opposed to the war. Similar laws have been passed by pro-Moscow governments in Belarus, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan.

Lawmakers from Georgian Dream, the ruling party, deny the draft law was based on Russia's, arguing that it was modeled on the U.S. government's Foreign Agents Registration Act. That measure is also used to frame up political opponents, in this case by the rulers in Washington.

The Georgian government says it wants to join the U.S.-led NATO alliance. Days after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine it applied for membership in the European Union, along with the governments of Moldova and Ukraine.

The mood was festive outside of Georgia's parliament in Tbilisi after the government announced it had withdrawn the bill. "This is a victory. We won thanks to our unity," student Irina Shurgaia told Agence France-Presse.

Thousands had gathered for days after legislators took the first steps toward passing the measure. Police attacked protesters with tear gas and water cannons and arrested 77 people. The next day thousands gathered in front of parliament, chanting "No to the Russian law!"

Protests were also held in Batumi, Georgia's second-largest city.

Moscow invaded Georgia in 2008 and still occupies part of the country.

In the early 1990s the Kremlin backed pro-Moscow separatists in the regions of Abkhazia and South Osse-

tia. The 2008 invasion resulted in the ethnic cleansing of Georgians in the two regions, which include about 20% of the country's territory. The Kremlin continues to station troops there.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov slandered today's Georgian protesters claiming their actions were "being orchestrated from abroad."

Georgia was seized and annexed by Russia's czarist rulers in 1801. Following the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution in 1917, its workers and farmers government freed Georgians and other oppressed peoples from the czarist boot, guaranteeing their right to self-determination — the first government to ever do so. This conquest was reversed when workers and farmers were driven from power during a counterrevolution headed by Joseph Stalin.

Georgia declared independence again in 1991 when the Stalinist regime collapsed.

There is widespread opposition in Georgia to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Thirty thousand people turned out in Tbilisi to protest when Moscow invaded last year. Over 100,000 Russians fled to Georgia since the war began and now live there. At the war's one-year mark, Feb. 24, tens of thousands marched again, carrying Ukrainian flags and anti-Putin signs. Among them were thousands of the Russians who had fled.

Many held signs like "No to war," "12 months of Russian terror in Ukraine" and "Putin is not the motherland."

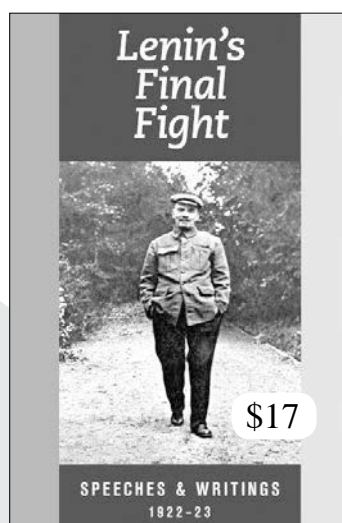
"I declare war to the death on Great Russian chauvinism."

"It must be absolutely insisted that the union Central Executive Committee should be presided over in turn by a Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian, etc. Absolutely!"

— V.I. Lenin, 1922

In 1922 and 1923 Lenin waged his last political battle. At stake was whether the revolution would remain on the proletarian course that had brought workers and peasants to power.

pathfinderpress.com



Working people fight for cleanup

Continued from front page

The truth is the rail bosses, with support from government officials at every level, rushed to puncture, bleed out, and burn off five derailed carloads full of toxic vinyl chloride, creating a billowing black cloud and raining down dangerous chemicals for miles. The burn produced phosgene gas, the same heavier-than-air gas that was used to kill over 75,000 soldiers in the deadly trench warfare that marked the first imperialist world war. Then, within hours, they had re-laid the tracks and started running trains through the town again. As in all questions, the drive for profits dictated their every move.

Protests by working people in the area forced the company to back down and agree to rip up the new tracks and remove tons of dangerous chemical-soaked soil underneath.

As we have in previous visits to learn about and express solidarity with workers, small-business people and farmers here, we pointed to this victory as proof that it's possible for our class and its allies to organize in our own interests against the rail bosses and their government. Involving the many unions in this area would be crucial. Volunteer committees could monitor the testing of air, water and soil, and demand specific testing and remediation. They could publicize the results and fight for permanent free medical clinics in the area paid for by Norfolk Southern to test for and deal with effects of the disaster.

Robert Anderson, a young car mechanic who lives in Enon Valley, close to the derailment site, wanted to talk. He grew up in the area. His grandfather has a farm nearby. Anderson had previously spoken to SWP members. "I would like to see us get together," he said. "But I feel like you can't fight a big corporation. It looks bleak to me. I don't disagree, but it's uphill the whole way."

Steve Zamboni answered. "They do own the means of production, but we produce all the wealth. And we're the vast majority. We need to build solidarity."

"Yes, we do need to get together," Anderson said.

"Rail workers across the country were going on strike in December," Zamboni, a freight worker said. "But the government stepped in and told us, 'You can't strike. We're forcing you to take the union contracts that the majority had rejected. But with this derailment there's a lot of attention on the conditions we work under, especially the massive layoffs all the railroads did. "Now we have a big opportunity to

reach out and get support for our demands. Union leaders have protested the conditions here. The rail unions should get involved in the fight here," Zamboni said.

As a result of the discussion, Anderson decided to subscribe to the *Militant* and bought the books, *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* and *The Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us: The Socialist Workers Party Looks Forward* by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Steve Clark.

People want to express solidarity

When *Militant* worker-correspondents Tony Lane and Malcolm Jarrett dropped by the Sutherin Greenhouse to talk with owner Dianna Elzer and worker Tish McDevitt, who are determined to rebuild the area, they described how a woman had come to see how she could help. "We said go for it," Elzer said.

Turned out nurse Terri Graleski was a member of a Jeep owners club in nearby East Liverpool, and is now organizing an area-wide "Jeep invasion" March 18 to bring people to East Palestine.

"I just thought that someone had to do something to help them out," she told WKBN News. "It's a way to get people into their town and get their businesses patronized." Graleski stressed that everyone's invited, not just Jeep club members. Posters are up all over town, saying activities will run from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

This initiative shows the potential for building a fighting alliance of workers, farmers and others to advance control over their lives.

Besides the rail company and government officials who want to keep workers out of their affairs, the biggest obstacle to this fighting course is the army of lawyers who have descended on the area, smelling money. Their interest is in painting the most catastrophic possible picture of future life in the town and pushing lawsuits as the only possible remedy.

Militant subscribers Linda and Russ Murphy spoke on the phone later with this *Militant* worker-correspondent. "Two wells near us tested positive for some of the chemicals on that train," Linda Murphy told me. "Then the Environmental Protection Agency said that maybe the tests were 'false positives' or not above a safety risk! I don't trust any of them."

"They stopped the town hall meetings," Russ Murphy said. "Now there are tables set up where you can get literature, including one titled, 'Odors aren't dangerous.' They aren't"

Protests in Greece hit gov't, EU, IMF over rail disaster



Konstantinos Zilos/NurPhoto via AP

Thousands of workers and youth marched across Greece again March 12, protesting the Greek government's responsibility in the head-on collision between a passenger and a freight train that killed 57 people Feb. 28. They demanded those involved be punished. More than 8,000 protesters flooded streets in Athens, above, with signs saying, "We won't forget. We won't forgive!" and "We will not mourn more kids on the altar of profit."

They marched to the headquarters of Hellenic Train, which was taken over by the Italian rail company Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane in 2017. Hellenic Train runs the operating equipment and train crews, while state-owned Hellenic Railways is responsible for maintenance of the tracks.

Some 5,000 protested in Thessaloniki. The passenger train wrecked Feb. 28 was carrying hundreds of students and others from Athens to Thessaloniki after a holiday weekend. Another round of protests is scheduled for March 16.

The government tried to blame the station manager on duty that night, saying the disaster was the product of "human error." But the railroad has been underfinanced and deteriorating for years. Under the pressure of demands by the International Monetary Fund and EU for the Greek government to slash social expenditures to repay outstanding loans, successive administrations have cut jobs and failed to keep equipment working.

— JOHN STUDER

"You can ask questions of representatives of the EPA or testing companies. But they give you smooth talk. It's 'divide and conquer,'" he added. "On residents' illnesses, they explain maybe it's the 'power of suggestion.'"

"I would love to take up the sword and shield," Linda Murphy said. "But I don't think what you're suggesting is realistic. There have been meetings. The first was total chaos. In the second, we were asked to write up statements on our situations and concerns to be taken to Washington. I'm a pretty private person, but I took it seriously and wrote the statement. Then we heard nothing back!"

I said the Socialist Workers Party's view on the possibility of a fight here is based on the victories you've won so far, but more importantly on the fact that the "Low Point of Labor Resistance Is Behind Us," which is the title of the book the couple had purchased earlier.

"This isn't five years ago. The level of anger in the country among working people is high. We've seen a growing number of strikes and the truckers' protests," I said. "We don't make any predictions on what will happen, or if effective united action will succeed here. All we're saying is that there is no other road and we have a shot. Relying on the government, much less Norfolk Southern, or agreeing with the lawyers that 'we are your only hope' will get us nowhere. "What we suggest — committees of workers, farmers and small-business owners involving the area unions, particularly the rail unions — is really the only way to guarantee that all measures are taken to protect the health and livelihoods of working people here."

"I think we're taking a nip at it here," Russ Murphy said. "But it's not just this derailment. Look at the crime levels. The medical system is getting worse annually. A hospital near here closed its maternity ward a couple of years ago. Change has to

come, but I don't know how."

I said, "You're exactly right. The problems we face are systemwide. Working people getting organized is the only way forward."

"Rail workers face the same challenges, as our bosses slash crews, make our schedule a living hell, cut back on maintenance and run longer and more dangerous trains," Wagner told the *Militant* March 15. "We need to organize all rail workers through our unions to fight for control over the conditions and operations in the rail industry."

Candace Wagner is a rail conductor and member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

SPECIAL OFFER FOR MILITANT SUBSCRIBERS

Books workers need today

About building the only kind of party worthy of the name "revolutionary"

20% OFF ALL OTHER PATHFINDER TITLES

\$5

The low point of labor resistance is behind us

JACK BARNES

Black Liberation: The Road to Workers Power

\$10

THE TURN TO INDUSTRY

Fighting a proletarian party

Jack Barnes

\$8

Women in Cuba

The making of a revolution within the revolution

Yolanda Garner

\$12

LABOR, NATURE

EVOLUTION OF HUMANITY

THE LONG QUEST OF THE WORKING CLASS

\$7

TEAMSTER REBELLION

Tribunes of the People and the Trade Unions

The Jewish Question

The Clintons' anti-working-class record

Are they rich because they're smart?

■ Teamster Rebellion / \$10

■ The Jewish Question / \$12

■ Tribunes of the People & the Trade Unions / \$7

■ The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record / \$5

■ Cuba and the Coming American Revolution / \$5

■ Are They Rich Because They're Smart? / \$5

SEE DISTRIBUTORS ON PAGE 10 OR VISIT PATHFINDERPRESS.COM

Cuban rail workers defend safety, gains of socialist revolution

BY LAURA GARZA

HAVANA — While in Cuba for the Havana International Book Fair in February, several volunteers at the Pathfinder Press stand who are rail workers were able to exchange experiences with leaders of Cuba's National Union of Transportation and Port Workers (SNTTP), which includes rail workers. The visiting rail workers who were part of the discussion organized by the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC) came from Canada, the United Kingdom, and this reporter from the U.S.

Transportation workers in Cuba are on the front lines of defending the gains made by working people through their socialist revolution. Along with other workers and farmers, they are fighting to increase production of much-needed goods and services.

"The biggest challenges we face come from limitations imposed by the U.S. embargo against us," said Fermin Umpierre, the union's general secretary. Transportation is one of the industries most disrupted by sanctions imposed by the U.S. government. The impact on the daily lives of the Cuban population is visible everywhere, including the long lines of Cubans waiting at bus stops throughout Havana.

Since 1959, when workers and peasants in Cuba overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and took state power, ending capitalist exploitation and oppression, the imperialist rulers have waged unrelenting economic, trade and financial warfare against the Cuban people.

Washington's economic sanctions affect all transport operations, from bus and train service to domestic and international flights to ships entering and leaving the harbor.

Cuba is unable to purchase locomotives and other equipment due to sanctions and fines imposed by Washington on U.S. and foreign manufacturers and banks who would otherwise be eager to trade with Cuba. Companies in Canada and Europe won't sell them new locomotives, for example, because more than 10% of their parts are made



International Railway Journal

Cuba's first new rail link in two decades was opened between Havana and port of Mariel in 2014. Cuban trains have five-person crews. For 16-hour Havana-Santiago run across the island, two crews work eight-hour shifts each, with sleeping car for those off-duty.

in the U.S. So Cuba's national railroad company operates decades-old equipment from the U.S., along with equipment from Mexico, China and Russia, all of which increases operation and maintenance costs.

"We're forced into a captive market with Russia," said Umpierre. And since Russian locomotives have parts made in both Russia and Ukraine, with the war in Ukraine it has become hard to get those parts, he noted. Cuban planes sent to Russia for maintenance are now stuck there due to the war, he added.

To counter the impact of Washington's economic war, SNTTP members organize to find innovative ways to keep equipment running by making substitute parts and adapting machinery for other purposes. They are part of the CTC's National Association of Innovators, a movement founded decades ago that is now made up of tens of thousands of workers from every industry.

In 2019 the Trump administration put into effect Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, passed during the Clinton administration. This provision allows for lawsuits by Cuban Americans demanding compensation from those they claim are profiting from properties that before 1959 they owned — like cruise ship landing docks in Havana — that were nationalized by the revolutionary government.

Fear of retaliation by Washington

has driven away U.S. and other foreign investors who want to trade with Cuba, said Umpierre.

A French company that had agreed to invest in modernizing rail repair and maintenance facilities, some of which were built in the 1970s and are badly in need of updating, changed plans because the facility used to be U.S.-owned. The former owners "hope this shop and other properties will again be theirs someday," said Umpierre.

For the past six decades, workers here have not only resisted Washington's assault, but continue to extend solidarity to working people around the world who are resisting the consequences of the capitalist crisis worldwide.

Sharp contrast with U.S. conditions

The Cuban trade union leaders we spoke with were keenly interested in the descriptions we gave of conditions in the countries where we live. We described recent labor fights in the United States, from striking nurses to rail workers; in Canada, where school workers beat back a government union-busting attack; and in the United Kingdom, where a number of recent nationwide strikes show the changing moods of working people.

"The rail bosses have been on the offensive for decades," I told my fellow Cuban unionists. "They've slashed crew sizes while making trains lon-

ger and cutting back on maintenance and inspections. They've also made it harder to get time off, and that's why workers in the U.S. want to fight back and voted to strike, a move blocked by the intervention of the Biden administration and Congress."

"How long does it take to become an engineer in Cuba?" asked Felix Ardea, a conductor in Montreal. "In Canada and the U.S., the bosses rush the training."

"Here it takes four to five years to become an engineer. To be qualified to be in charge of the train it takes 10 years," said Agustín Robert Sánchez, a former rail worker now working as an official in the union's port workers section. "We want to make sure the engineers and conductors really know how to operate the equipment and know the routes," said Alberto Morey, a leader of the union's rail sector.

"Where I work in California, it's a 13-week course to become a conductor, and then a worker can quickly sign up to take the six-month engineer training," I said. "So you can end up with two new people on a crew, in charge of a train that is more than 2 miles long, traveling over a mountain grade and carrying hazardous materials."

Rail workers' schedules and shifts in Cuba are in stark contrast to the long hours and scarce time off faced by those of us in the U.S. or Canada. A Cuban train crew is composed of a conductor, a conductor's assistant, an engineer and assistant engineer, and a mechanic/technical worker. To run the Havana-Santiago route, which takes 16 hours across the island, two crews work eight-hour shifts each. They have a sleeping car for the crew not on duty. Then they have four days off before working again.

We spoke with the Cuban trade unionists in the wake of the derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, when coverage of the disaster was reaching Cuba (see solidarity message from the Cuban unions to rail workers in the U.S. on page 8).

They were stunned by our description of the utter indifference of U.S. rail bosses to the safety of both rail workers and communities surrounding rail lines. In Cuba, they told us, accidents of such a magnitude are extremely rare, even despite the major obstacles they face in getting spare parts and materials due to U.S. sanctions.

Nebraska rail worker speaks out on using union power

BY JOE SWANSON

LINCOLN, Neb. — Railroad derailments are increasing in many states, with Nebraska among those with the highest number of train derailments. Since 2000, a train has derailed in the state roughly once every seven days.

The Feb. 3 derailment in East Palestine was a "wake-up call," Andrew Foust, state legislative director of Nebraska Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers Transportation Division (SMART-TD), said at the March 6 Nebraska Senate Transportation and Telecommunications Committee hearing on the rail industry.

The hearing was attended by nearly 70 rail union members.

The increasing numbers of derailments are no surprise to rail workers, who have seen rail bosses eliminate

thousands of jobs in recent years in their drive to boost profits at the expense of safety for workers and those who live along the tracks.

Many of the proposals being considered by the state Senate committee involved new regulations for the industry. But reliance on the capitalist rulers and their government bureaucracy not only doesn't work, it cuts across preparing workers to use union power, the most important thing they've got, and to tap the deep well of solidarity from other unionists and the working-class public if we fight. This is the only road to win larger crews, shorter trains and safe working conditions.

"These hearings are a stage that working people can use to present a clearer picture of the dangers of the


working conditions in the railroad industry that unions will have to change," I said in the two minutes I had to speak before the committee.

"My union brothers and sisters are not naive, we know the railroad employers and their stockholders will do whatever is in their best interests, meaning profit.

"The long-term effects on workers and working farmers in the area since the Ohio derailment that led to the contamination of the air, soil, and water is still to be seen," I said, "but I'm sure you can understand the anger and fear people in East Palestine and people living in the rural areas have.

"Union workers need to organize to take control over their working conditions. Trains should be no longer than 50 cars, with a minimum crew of four, two on head and two on the rear."

Cuba rail union sends solidarity message to East Palestine



National Union of Transportation and Port Workers of Cuba

Workers and affiliates of the National Union of Transportation and Port Workers Union, and rail workers especially, regret the tragic accident on February 3 when a Norfolk Southern Railway train transporting toxic material derailed in East Palestine, Ohio.

At this difficult moment we send rail workers employed by that company our solidarity and extend our most deeply felt moral support in face of the consequences that this unfortunate accident has meant for job and health conditions.

Fraternal greetings,
National Secretariat National Union of Transportation and Port Workers of Cuba (SNTTP)

Women wanted to help, to be part of Cuba's socialist revolution

To mark International Women's Day, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for March is *Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution*. It is by three leaders of the Federation of Cuban Women, Vilma Espín, Asela de los Santos and Yolanda Ferrer. This extract is from the chapter, "With No Preconceived Structure or Agenda." It tells the story of how Cuban women — workers, peasants, housewives and youth — demanded to be part of the unfolding socialist revolution and how doing so transformed their lives. Copyright © 2012 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY VILMA ESPÍN

The Federation of Cuban Women was launched on August 23, 1960. In reality, however, we had been laying the foundations for more than a year.

In 1959, the first year after the triumph, women wanted to organize to participate more effectively in the tasks of the revolution, and we responded to this pressure. I remember being struck, in the first months after the January 1 victory, by the large number of women, some carrying babies, who took part in demonstrations and street actions. There was strong support for the revolution, even before it had demonstrated its full meaning.

Women who were already orga-



Federation of Cuban Women
Graduation of 8,000 "Anitas," December 1961 in Havana. Young peasant women each received a sewing machine, pledging to teach 10 others how to sew, and to spread the revolution.

nized in various small groups approached me. They wrote letters; they asked to meet. These included people from the women's sections of the political parties that supported the revolution. Others came from religious organizations, such as groups of Catholic and Baptist women. There were trade union members — from the garment union, for example. There were peasant women. And, of course, there were women who had taken part in the war.

As you might expect, those of us who had participated in the war — whether in the urban underground or in the mountains — were approached by women who wanted to do precisely what we had done, to take part in the revolution. They looked to us for leadership.

"What can we do?" they asked.

"How can we show our support for the revolution?" "What's needed most?"

They asked to be trained in emergency medical care, because of the threats and attacks from imperialism. So that became one of our first tasks, even before we organized the Federation of Cuban Women. It was these classes, in fact, along with the sewing classes we organized, that gave birth to the federation — not the other way around.

The classes weren't just a way of responding to women who had asked for emergency medical training. They were a way of bringing women together, so we could discuss things they wanted to

know about the revolution.

Then the first revolutionary laws started to be issued by the new government.

From the very beginning we decided that all children would go to school. Parents were required by law to make sure they did so. So the first big job was to find enough teachers. Women responded to this need, both those who were already teachers and those who had finished sixth grade and were taking review courses to prepare for teaching.

Many women who were housewives, who didn't work outside the home, who had devoted themselves only to their children and their families, reached out to us. They, too, asked us what they could do.

We began to organize women who were already in trade unions, women who were workers, and women who had some kind of political experience, either in the past or more recently. We helped them set up classes in emergency medical treatment and sewing. The medical care classes were taught with the help of the Armed Forces and the Red Cross. The sewing classes were taught by women who had completed the initial courses. This was a way of organizing women who were housewives. They were very eager to learn how to make clothes for themselves and their children.

Women in the classes who had some political experience explained the new

laws to others. When the Agrarian Reform Law was adopted, women asked a lot of questions about it. Peasant women, of course, had a better understanding of what the law meant. But many women approached others known for their activity during the revolutionary struggle to learn about it and how they could support the revolution.

So the federation arose not so much as a decision of the revolutionary leadership but as a response to the demand from masses of women from different layers of society who were already in action. ...

When I talk about how the federation was created, I always emphasize that at the time we didn't talk about women's liberation. We didn't talk about women's emancipation, or the struggle for equality. We didn't use those terms then. What we did talk about was participation. Women wanted to participate. This included women who had taken an active part in the struggle, who had been in the mountains. They, like other women across the country, wanted to help in this new stage that was dawning, which was a genuine revolution.

From the very beginning, the new laws made it clear to the mother, the housewife, the woman who had lost her children in the struggle, that this revolution was in her interests. It was in the interests of her children and her family.

Women had confidence in the revolution — because there was real proof, every day, that the revolution wasn't just hot air, it wasn't empty phrases of the kind people were used to hearing from politicians in the past. This was the genuine thing. And women wanted to be part of it, to *do* something. The more the revolutionary laws strengthened this conviction, the more women demanded a chance to contribute — and the more they saw how necessary their contribution was.

Sometimes I'm asked to give a one-word definition of the Cuban Revolution. I reply that it's about participation — the participation of the entire people in everything. Together, the population went through difficult years. For women, this had an impact right from the beginning. They began to understand the point Lenin emphasized over and over — that for a revolution to move forward, to develop, women had to participate.

March

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Pathfinder
Readers Club
Specials

30%
DISCOUNT

Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution
From Santiago de Cuba and the Rebel Army, to the Birth of the Federation of Cuban Women
VILMA ESPÍN
ASELA DE LOS SANTOS
YOLANDA FERRER

Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution
The unprecedented integration of women in the ranks and leadership of Cuba's social revolution was a mark of its revolutionary course to today.
\$17. **Special price \$12**

Sexism and Science
EVELYN REED
\$15. **Special price \$10.50**

Problems of Everyday Life
LEON TROTSKY
\$20. **Special price \$14**

Samizdat
Voices of the Soviet Opposition
GEORGE SAUNDERS
\$23. **Special price \$16**

Speeches to the Party
JAMES P. CANNON
\$23 **Special price \$16**

Malcolm X parle aux jeunes
(Malcolm X Talks to Young People)
\$12. **Special price \$8.50**

Join the Pathfinder Readers Club for \$10 and receive discounts all year long

ORDER ONLINE AT
PATHFINDERPRESS.COM
OFFER GOOD UNTIL March 31

IF YOU LIKE THIS PAPER, LOOK US UP

Where to find distributors of the *Militant*, *New International*, and a full display of Pathfinder books.

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: **Oakland:** 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Zip: 94621. Tel: (510) 686-1351. Email: swpoak@sbcglobal.net **Los Angeles:** 2826 S. Vermont. Suite 1. Zip: 90007. Tel: (323) 643-4968. Email: swpla@att.net

FLORIDA: **Miami:** 5711 NW 7th Ave. Unit B. Zip: 33127. Tel: (305) 929-8966. Email: swpmiami@icloud.com

GEORGIA: **Atlanta:** 777 Cleveland Ave. SW Suite 103. Zip: 30315. Tel: (678) 528-7828. Email: swpatlanta@fastmail.com

ILLINOIS: **Chicago:** 1858 W. Cermak Road, 2nd floor. Zip: 60608. Tel: (312) 792-6160. Email: SWPChicago@fastmail.fm

MINNESOTA: **Minneapolis:** 2401 1/2 Central Ave. NE, Unit B. Zip: 55418. Tel: (612) 271-1930. Email: swpminneapolis@gmail.com

NEBRASKA: **Lincoln:** P.O. Box 6811.

Zip: 68506. Tel: (402) 217-4906. Email: swplincn@gmail.com

NEW JERSEY: 3600 Bergenline, Suite 205B, Union City. Zip: 07087. Tel: (551) 240-1512. swpnewjersey@gmail.com

NEW YORK: **New York:** 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor. Zip: 10018. Tel: (646) 434-8117. Email: newyorkswp@gmail.com

OHIO: **Cincinnati:** 2300 Montana Ave., Suite 230. Tel: Zip: 45211. (513) 837-1038. Email: swpcincinnati@gmail.com

PENNSYLVANIA: **Philadelphia:** 2824 Cottman Ave., Suite 16. Zip: 19149. Tel: (215) 708-1270. Email: philaswp@verizon.net **Pittsburgh:** 5907 Penn Ave., Suite 313. Zip: 15206. Tel: (412) 610-2402. Email: swppittsburgh@gmail.com

TEXAS: **Dallas-Fort Worth:** 6815 Manhattan Blvd., Suite 108 Fort Worth. Zip: 76120. Tel: (817) 899-6720. Email: dfswp@gmail.com

WASHINGTON, D.C.: 7603 Georgia Ave. NW, Suite 300. Zip: 20012. Tel: (202) 536-5080. Email: swp.washingtondc@verizon.net

WASHINGTON: **Seattle:** 650 S. Orcas St., #120 Zip: 98108. Tel: (206) 323-1755. Email: swpseattle@gmail.com

AUSTRALIA

Sydney: Suite 2, First floor, 275 George St., Liverpool. Postal Address: P.O. Box 73 Campsie, NSW 2194. Tel: (61) 435-995-604. Email: cl_australia@optusnet.com.au

CANADA

QUEBEC: **Montreal:** 7107 St. Denis #204 H2S 2S5. Tel: (514) 272-5840. Email: cllcmontreal@fastmail.com

FRANCE

Paris: BP 10130, 75723 Paris Cedex 15. Email: militant.paris@gmail.com

UNITED KINGDOM

ENGLAND: **London:** 5 Norman Road (first floor). Seven Sisters. Post code: N15 4ND. Tel: 020-3538 8900. Email: cllondon@fastmail.fm **Manchester:** 329, Royal Exchange Buildings, 3 Old Bank St. Post code: M2 7PE. Tel: (0161) 312-8119. Email: clmanchr@gmail.com

Bank failures reflect crisis of capitalism

The collapse of three regional banks and the underlying fall in the value of U.S. government bonds caused by rising interest rates is a symptom of the ongoing crisis of capitalist production and trade, and a harbinger of further crises to come.

So-called government bailouts — like President Joseph Biden handing out billions to protect wealthy capitalist depositors — are never aimed at protecting the checking accounts of workers or small-business owners. These decisions underscore the fact that the government serves the propertied ruling families.

For now, these steps have stemmed the plunge in the bond markets and averted further bank collapses. But some 2,315 U.S. banks with \$11 trillion in assets still have fewer assets on their balance sheets than they would need to cover their liabilities.

Whatever the immediate future holds, capitalist competition will continue to sharpen and sooner or later new crises will break out. No new government regulation will alter the workings of dog-eat-dog capitalism. Rising trade in stocks and bonds and ever greater reliance on credit is an inevitable feature of our imperialist epoch. The bosses will be driven to deepen their attacks on workers and farmers.

And, as profits are threatened, the ruling rich will look for get-rich schemes and speculation.

Frederick Engels, a founder of the communist movement, explained all capitalist nations “are periodically seized by fits of giddiness in which they try to accomplish the money making without the mediation of the production process.”

The origins of today’s crisis are outlined in the 2002 article *Capitalism’s Long Hot Winter Has Begun* by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes, available in *New International* no. 12.

“It’s not the hi-tech mania, multiple bankruptcies or massive accounting frauds ... that lie at the root of the current capitalist crisis,” he writes. “These are merely diversionary symptoms of the giant debt bubble built up by finance capital over nearly two decades to counteract growing global overproduction and downward pressure on profit rates.”

What these conditions will eventually lead to is not only more financial turmoil but increasing battles between the two main contending classes in modern society. The decadeslong retreat of the working class and our unions is behind us. The increasing confidence of workers to join together to fight for what we need can be seen in the strikes over the last couple of years by bakery workers, coal miners, truckers. And in the actions today of rail workers in Greece, trade unionists in France, fighters for rights in Iran and in the resistance of working people in Ukraine as they lead the battle against Moscow’s invasion. There are greater openings to act on the interests workers share in common worldwide and to build the nucleus of a class-struggle left-wing in the unions.

In the course of struggles that lie ahead class conscious workers will have the opportunity to act on the example set by workers and farmers in Cuba who uprooted capitalist rule and took political power into their own hands. Building proletarian parties here and worldwide is the road to leading millions to make a socialist revolution and open the door to a future free of the growing insecurity, crises and wars bred by capitalism — a future only the working class and its allies are capable of bringing into existence.

These questions and more will be taken up at the Socialist Workers Party-sponsored International Educational Conference in Oberlin June 8-11. For more information, contact the branch nearest you.

NJ march protests cop killing of Najee Seabrooks

BY JOANNE KUNIAISKY

PATERSON, N.J. — Hundreds took part in a vigil, march and rally outside City Hall here March 7 protesting the police killing of 31-year-old Najee Seabrooks four days earlier. The action was organized by his family and the Paterson Healing Collective where Seabrooks worked as a crisis intervener.

Seabrooks, who was Black, was suffering a mental health crisis and had barricaded himself inside his apartment. The Paterson Police Department’s emergency team responded. During a more than four-hour standoff, Seabrooks broke some water pipes and started a small fire in the apartment.

Members of the Healing Collective and Seabrooks’ family were outside the apartment, pleading to be allowed to help, but police barred them from going in.

Then police broke into the apartment. They claimed Seabrooks lunged at them with two knives. Police said they couldn’t use a Taser, because water had run out on the floor, making it too dangerous. So, they shot and killed him instead.

“I keep replaying Friday over and over. Our team of crisis responders begged the police to allow us to help,” said Liza Choudhury of the Healing Collective.

Teddy Martinez, Seabrooks’ supervisor, said, “I’m begging the officer, showing them text messages, things that Najee is saying to me — ‘all I want to do is see your face and I’m going to come out.’ I told the officers this. They did not allow us in.”

“I believe that if the police had just given them the opportunity to talk to him, the outcome could have been different,” Valerie Freeman, a member of the Paterson Board of Education, told the media.

In a similar case in 2015, law enforcement officials, including the same police emergency response outfit, let a social worker speak to a man with a machete in a locked apartment. He gave himself up.

Pastor Charles Boyer, founder of the Salvation and Social Justice group in Trenton, told the crowd the Paterson police “have blood on their hands from decades of snuffing out Black lives. We need to see the Paterson Police Department taken over by people who have a heart for Black people.”

Rally organizers called for the city to identify the officers responsible for the shooting, release all cop body camera footage of the confrontation and place the officers involved on administrative leave. Other demands raised at the protest include establishing a civilian complaint review board, and the resignation of both Passaic County Prosecutor Camelia Valdes and Paterson Public Safety Director Jerry Speziale.

Thousands have signed a petition with these and other demands circulated by Black Lives Matter Paterson. After City Council member Michael Jackson told the rally that only 20 protesters would be allowed inside the building where the council was meeting, a small group began to push through the barricades. The majority remained disciplined with many shouting, “We don’t need this, we need to be organized.” The disruption was stopped.

“The Socialist Workers Party stands with working-class families like Najee Seabrooks’ fighting for some measure of justice for their loved ones killed by the police,” Lea Sherman, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New Jersey General Assembly, discussed with fellow protesters at the rally.

“But the police can’t be reformed or reorganized to serve our interests under capitalism — this is a class question. Police spying, cop brutality, the capitalist rulers’ ‘plea bargain’ system and their prisons are all essential tools for them to try and prevent working people from fighting to overturn the oppression we face,” Sherman said.

“Police pay special attention to workers who are Black, who have shown — as in the mass proletarian movement that overthrew Jim Crow segregation — their capacity to fight and lead broad social struggles,” she said. “The goal of the propertied rulers is to intimidate, divide and weaken the working class as a whole.”

More than 500 people have been killed during encounters with police officers statewide over the past two decades, the New Jersey Violence Intervention and Prevention statewide coalition reports.

Joanne Kuniansky is the SWP candidate for New Jersey state Senate.

‘Militant’ wins victory

Continued from front page

tests in Iran — were a “threat to the security, order, or rehabilitative objectives” of the prison.

The impoundment at Blackwater River “is a blatant violation not only of the Constitutional rights of the inmates to read what material they choose but also for the Constitutional protection of freedom of the press which the *Militant* enjoys,” Mark A. Lee, financial secretary/treasurer of Local 57 of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union in Mt. Gilead, Ohio, wrote to the Florida Department of Corrections Literature Review Committee.

Along with the ban at Blackwater River, the wardens at two other Florida state prisons — Charlotte and Wakulla Correctional Institutions — have been withholding the paper from at least some inmates without any written notice of impoundment, a violation of the Florida prison system’s own regulations.

Carl Roche, a railroad engineer in Miami, wrote, “The right to read is on the same level as the right to have a union and safe movement of trains.” He was one of a number of individuals in Florida and from around the country who wrote the committee protesting the ban, including a farmer in Plant City, Florida; a family doctor in Miami; and a Miami artist.

This was the first time in two years that Florida prison officials had impounded an issue of the *Militant*. But starting in 2013 Florida prison officials have tried to suppress the paper nearly 50 times. The *Militant* challenges every attempt to ban the paper and has won the vast majority.

“This time the outlandish ‘reason’ given for banning the paper helped make it clear that this had nothing to do with ‘security’ and everything to do with suppressing the *Militant* because of our working-class politics,” said *Militant* editor John Studer. “In fact, that has always been the case when prison officials try to block the paper.

“Our fight is not just for the *Militant*,” he added. “Every time we fight these bans, we are helping defend the right to free speech and freedom of the press for everyone. Prison officials in Florida and elsewhere ban thousands of papers, magazines and books. They assume no one will notice or complain. We are setting an example others can use.

“That’s part of the reason we get the broad support we receive. We have become known as determined and effective fighters for crucial political rights.

“We are convinced that workers behind bars have the right to read material of their choosing, to think for themselves, to form their own opinions,” Studer said, “to follow the class struggle battles unfolding today.”

Melvin Herring, assistant chief of education for the Florida Department of Corrections, wrote to organizations and individuals that had protested the ban, saying, “The publication is being processed for release to the inmate.”

But he made no mention of the blocking of the paper from subscribers at Charlotte and Wakulla. The *Militant*’s attorney, David Goldstein, of the prominent civil liberties law firm Rabinowitz, Boudin, Standard, Krinsky and Lieberman, plans to follow up with officials on these issues.

The *Militant* currently has 193 subscribers in federal and state prisons in 26 states. “Every time we win against those who try to ban the *Militant*, we gain more respect and more subscribers,” Studer said.

Know someone in prison who should have a subscription to the ‘Militant’?

Let them know they can get a reduced rate or complimentary subscription by writing us at:

306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor
New York, NY 10018

Donate to the prisoners fund online at:
www.themilitant.com